

Land, and in the relations of the
Christian West
with the Moslem powers, As the ruler
of an island
largely Mohammedan, intent on
maintaining
there the balance of creeds and races,
he was not
inclined to a dangerous provocation of
the power
of Islam, He had indeed conquered a
considerable
extent of coast in Northern Africa, but
more for
security and the purposes of trade
than the exter-
mination or expulsion of the Moslems
which the
Western princes aimed at, His mind
was little
in sympathy with the crusading idea,
But no
crusade could be planned or executed
without his
being taken into account, His
admirals had
already made Sicily a naval power
which, con-
trolling the Tyrrhene Sea and the
lower Adriatic,
commanded all the sea routes to the
Holy Land,
The first crusading armies had
straggled as far
as Jerusalem by the long and
dangerous land
route of the Rhine, the Danube, the
Greek Empire,
and Iconium. The Second Crusade
was to show
that the land route was still favoured
by the un-
wieldy armies of the Cross, but those
who survived
it were glad to return by sea; and in
the interval of
the two Crusades, it was by the Straits
of Messina

that pilgrims sought the Holy Land,
that the
military orders of the East were
recruited from
Europe, and that the Western
countries main-
tained communications with the
Frankish princes,
The fleets of Moslem Egypt, the ships
of the Greek
Empire, had given way to Venice and
the admirals
of Sicily, and in his narrow seas Roger
claimed a